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Tijs Laenen (KU Leuven, Belgium) and
Christian Albrekt Larsen (Aalborg University, Denmark)

Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies (CCWS)
Department of Economics, Politics and Public Administration
Aalborg University
www.ccws.dk

Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies
Working Paper
Editor: Per H. Jensen
E-mail: perh@dps.aau.dk

www.ccws.dk

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Tijs Laenen (KU Leuven, Belgium) and Christian Albrekt Larsen (Aalborg University, Denmark)

Abstract. In many European countries, today's unemployment benefits are considerably less generous in terms of social rights and more conditional in terms of work-related obligations than they were a few decades ago. This article seeks to explain the puzzle of why such retrenchment faced little public resistance in a number of countries, including Denmark and the Netherlands. The lack of resistance is puzzling because Dutch and Danish unemployment schemes have traditionally had relatively large and well-organized welfare constituencies. The core argument of the article is that absence of public resistance is rooted in rather harsh deservingness beliefs regarding the unemployed within the constituencies of unemployment benefits. Using Dutch and Danish survey data, the article demonstrates this mechanism by showing that large parts of the constituencies of unemployment insurance, operationalized as self-reported benefit receipt and unemployment experience, evaluate unemployed people quite negatively on the deservingness criteria of control, attitude, reciprocity, identity, and need. Furthermore, these deservingness perceptions strongly decrease constituents' generosity and increase their conditionality towards the unemployed.

Keywords: unemployment protection; retrenchment; welfare constituents; welfare deservingness; Denmark; the Netherlands

Introduction

Across Europe, a general trend over the past few decades is that unemployment provision has become less generous in terms of social rights and more conditional in terms of work-related obligations (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011; Clasen & Clegg, 2011; Clasen, Kvist, & van Oorschot, 2001; Langenbucher, 2015). With the aim of 'activating' the unemployed, eligibility rules were tightened, benefit levels declined or stagnated, entitlement periods shortened, and demands on geographical, occupational and wage mobility toughened. However, in some European countries, such retrenchment rarely met fierce public resistance – at least not when compared to policy areas such as pensions or healthcare. In Denmark and the Netherlands, for example, unemployment insurance was severely retrenched over the past 30 years but public resistance was largely lacking (Goul Andersen, 2011; Hoogenboom, 2011). From Pierson's (1994, 1996) perspective on the 'new politics of the welfare state', the absence of large-scale mobilization against retrenchment of unemployment benefits is rather surprising, as in Europe, and particularly also in the so-called 'flexicurity' models of Denmark and the Netherlands, these programs serve relatively large and well-organized welfare constituencies whose political power should enable them to defend their beloved programs against governmental cutbacks. After all, for decades, unemployment benefits have delivered economic security to large parts of the Dutch and Danish workforce, whose interests have traditionally been promoted by highly specialized trade unions. This article seeks to explain the puzzle of why retrenchment of unemployment protection schemes faced relatively little public opposition in Denmark and the Netherlands, despite having politically powerful welfare constituencies at their disposal. The core argument is that the welfare constituents of unemployment insurance, i.e. those who have a direct stake in unemployment provision as (likely) beneficiaries and thus bear the concentrated loss in case of retrenchment, did not mobilize because their deservingness beliefs regarding unemployed people have refrained them from doing so. Despite having an outspoken self-interest in generous and unconditional unemployment benefits, constituents might, just as the broader population, have rather harsh deservingness perceptions of the unemployed, and attach great weight to such perceptions when forming opinions about social welfare (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). As unemployed people are, at least when compared to the old or the sick, more-often associated with undesirable attributes such as laziness and fraudulent behavior (van Oorschot, 2006),

such emphasis on welfare deservingness is likely to increase acceptance of welfare retrenchment (Slothuus, 2007).

Using unique but hitherto underused data from the 2006 Dutch and 2008 Danish *Welfare Opinions Survey*, this article examines the role played by the popular deservingness perceptions of the welfare constituents of unemployment insurance in shaping their support for the social rights and social obligations of the unemployed. On the basis of self-reported receipt of unemployment benefits and unemployment experience, we identified three sub-groups within the population. The group of primary interest for this article, the core constituency, consists of those currently receiving unemployment benefits within the family/household, and those who have been unemployed in the recent past (DK) or expect to be unemployed in the near future (NL). A second sub-group, the peripheral constituency, comprises those who report to have received an unemployment benefit earlier in life, but do not belong to the core constituency. A third sub-group, the non-constituency, is a residual category that consists of those who have not received unemployment benefits, have not recently been unemployed, or don't expect to be unemployed in the near future.

The article is divided into five sections. A first explains in more detail how unemployment insurance (from here on termed 'UI') in Denmark and the Netherlands was retrenched over the past 30 years. The second section tries to figure out why such retrenchment did not meet the anticipated public resistance from the welfare constituencies of UI. A third section specifies the data and methods we have used to test our argument. The fourth section scrutinizes how generous and conditional the welfare constituents are towards the unemployed, how they perceive the unemployed on a number of deservingness dimensions, and what role these deservingness perceptions play in shaping support for the social rights and obligations of the unemployed. A fifth and final section concludes and offers some possible avenues for future research.

Retrenchment of unemployment insurance in Denmark and the Netherlands

Before turning to the policy developments that have taken place within the unemployment protection systems of Denmark and the Netherlands, it is worth taking note of their basic programmatic structure. Dutch unemployment provision is organized as a compulsory Bismarckian social insurance covering all employees working in the Netherlands. To be eligible for the mostly wage-related benefits, claimants are required to be involuntarily unemployed and to have a minimum work record within a given reference period. Dutch UI

is financed, for the most part, through social security contributions paid by employers on behalf of their employees. The administration of UI laid firmly in the hands of the social partners until 2002, when the state took over and transferred all administrative tasks to the then newly-established Social Security Agency (*Uitvoeringsorgaan Werknemersverzekeringen*). After the maximum period of entitlement to UI expires, unemployed people generally fall back onto a separate means-tested social assistance scheme that provides benefits up to a maximum of the Dutch minimum wage. Danish unemployment protection is also organized as a two-tier system, with the first tier being a social insurance scheme, and the second tier a social assistance scheme. Danish UI is a voluntary scheme which covers all employees that are members of an insurance fund (around 80% of the workforce). Benefit eligibility is dependent on previous work record and fund membership, and benefit levels are wage-related (90% of previous wages but with a relatively low ceiling). The administration of UI is entrusted to independent insurance funds that are closely connected to the trade unions, while activation measures are run by municipalities (since 2007). The Danish scheme is mostly financed from member contributions and general taxation. The main changes of the Dutch and Danish UI over the past 30 years are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. The decline of social rights and the rise of social obligations in unemployment insurance in Denmark and the Netherlands

	Denmark	The Netherlands
Work record requirement	1993: Activation abolished as qualifying work. 1995: from 26 weeks of ordinary employment within 78 weeks to 26 weeks within 156 weeks. 2010: from 26 weeks to 52 weeks of ordinary employment within 156 weeks.	1987: From 130 days to 26 weeks in the previous 12 months for the short-term benefit; for the prolonged benefit and the follow-up benefit there is the additional requirement of having worked at least 52 days in 3 out of the last 5 years. 1995: From 26 weeks in the previous 12 months to 26 weeks in the previous 39 weeks for the short-term benefit; for the prolonged (from here on called the 'salary-related benefit') and the follow-up benefit there is the additional requirement of having worked at least 52 days in 4 out of the last 5 years. 2007: From 26 weeks in the previous 39 weeks to 26 weeks in the previous 36 weeks for both the short-term benefit and the salary-related benefit.
Benefit level	1985: Benefit reduction after 5.5 years for those below 25 years. Later also for older groups. 1995: Reduced for those below 25 years without education. 2015: Reduced for newly educated (without job experience).	1987: From 80% to 70% of the previous wage for the short-term and the prolonged benefit; the newly introduced follow-up benefit was set at a flat-rate of 70% of the minimum wage. 1995: Expansion of the flat-rate amount of 70% of the minimum wage to those in receipt of the short-term benefit. 1993-1995: Freezing of most unemployment benefits. 2009: From 70% to 75% of the previous wage for the first two months of unemployment; 70% thereafter.
Benefit duration	1993: Reduced to 7 years (from endless, in principle). 1994: Prolonged duration for unemployed above 50 years old. 1995: Reduced to 5 years 1998: Reduced to 4 years. Abolishment of prolonged period for those above 50 years. 2010: Reduced to 2 years. 2012-15: Temporary prolonged period - general 6 months (2012). - six months education at reduced benefit level. (2013). - "Temporary labour market benefit" at reduced benefit (2014) - "Temporary cash benefit" (2015). 2015: Transitional rules abolished. Possibility to earn 1 year extra through temporary employment.	1987: From a maximum of 2.5 years to 6 years, but only for those with an extensive work record eligible for the prolonged and the follow-up benefit. For people with shorter work history, the maximum period is reduced from 2.5 years to 6 months. 1995: From a maximum of 6 years to 7.5 years, but only for those with an extensive work record eligible for the salary-related and the follow-up benefit. For people with shorter work history, the maximum period stays at 6 months. 2003: From a maximum of 7.5 years to 5.5 years, due to the abolishment of the follow-up benefit. 2008: From a maximum of 5.5 years to 44 months, due to the shortening of the maximum period of the salary-related benefit from 5 years to 38 months. 2009: From a maximum of 44 to 41 months; due to the shortening of the short-term benefit from 6 to 3 months. 2016-2019: From a maximum of 41 to 27 months, due to the gradual lowering of the maximum period of the salary-related benefit from 38 to 24 months.

Work-related obligations	1993: Compulsory participation in activation schemes after 3 years of unemployment. 1994: Strengthening of the monitoring of job search and increased sanctions. 1995: Obligation to take "suitable" jobs after 6 months. Obligation increased from 3 to 4 hours daily commuting time. Increases sanctions for absence from activation. 1998: Compulsory participation in activation schemes after 1 year (6 months for those below 25 years). Obligation to take "suitable" jobs after 3 months. 2002: Obligation to take "suitable" jobs from day one (also during activation). Increased monitoring and sanctions. 2006: Increased monitoring (meeting every 3 months; weekly login at Jobnet) and new sanctions if absent from meeting. Activation after nine months, full time activation after 2,5 year.	1992: Tougher demands on occupational, geographical, and wage mobility; after 6 months of benefit receipt, unemployed people are expected to accept job offers at an increasingly lower educational level or wage level; the unemployed are also expected to accept jobs with a maximum travel time of 3 hours. 1996: Introduction of the Law on Penalties and Measures (*Wet Boeten en Maatregelen*), which requires social security administrations to enforce the existing sanctioning policies more vigorously. 1996: Tightening of the suitable work definition for school leavers; they are expected to accept any job offer from the first day of unemployment. 2008: Tightening of the suitable work definition; all unemployed people are expected to accept any job offer after 12 months. 2015: Tightening of the suitable work definition; all unemployed people are obliged to accept any job offer after 6 months.

Based on: Bruttel & Sol, 2006; Clasen et al., 2001; Goul Andersen, 2011b; Goul Andersen, Larsen, & Jensen, 2003; Green-Pedersen, 2002; Hasselpflug, 2005; Hoogenboom, 2011; Jorgensen, 2006; Langenbucher, 2015; van Oorschot & Abrahamson, 2003; van Oorschot & Engelfriet, 1999; Venn, 2012

Starting from the so-called 'first labour market' reform in 1993, Danish UI was changed from being extremely generous and unconditional to being more in line with other European schemes. In terms of work record requirement, the 1993-reform ended the system where participation in activation qualified for a new unemployment period, which had established a de facto duration of unemployment benefits around 8 to 9 years. This was softened by a reduction in work record requirement from 1995; from 26 weeks of ordinary employment within 78 weeks to 26 weeks within 156 weeks. In 2010, the work record requirement was increased from 26 weeks to 52 weeks of ordinary employment within 156 weeks. Thus, in long-term perspective, the work record requirement has increased; especially so for requalification of unemployment benefits (from almost none to 52 weeks within 156 weeks). In terms of benefit levels, the system of 90% of previous wages up to an indexed low benefit ceiling has remained intact for the large majority of unemployed. Only the young long-term unemployed (1985), the young without education (1995) and the newly educated (2015) have experienced decreased benefit levels. Thus, from an individual perspective the compensation rates of Danish unemployment benefits have largely been maintained. However, from an aggregated perspective the compensation rates have declined as more unemployed reached the low ceiling (2500 EUR per month in 2018). Thus, there is a discussion about the level of retrenchment of benefit level. In terms of benefit duration, the Danish UI has been severely retrenched from in principle endless to 7 years (1993), 5 years (1995), 4 years (1998), and, ultimately, 2 years (2010). The severe reduction was followed by a number of softening transitional rules. The first was prolonged duration for unemployed above 50 years old,

which was introduced in 1994 and abolished in 1998. The second was a number of temporary schemes that prolonged the duration for unemployed in 2012 who were hit by the two year rule introduced in 2010. It turned out that the government estimates largely underestimated the number of affected unemployed (by a ten-fold). In 2012 the duration was temporarily prolonged with six months, which was followed by a temporary new education scheme (2013), a temporary labour market benefit (2014) and a temporary cash benefit (2015) at reduced levels. Finally, a new more permanent agreement from 2015 confirmed the two year duration period but introduced the possibility to extend the duration with one year by means of small employment spells during unemployment. However, in a long-term perspective the duration of Danish UI has been shortened considerably. Finally, in terms of work-related obligations, Danish UI has clearly also been retrenched. Prior to the 1993-reform, the so-called half-year job-offers were mainly a way to requalify for another period of fairly unconditional unemployment benefits. This was changed in serious reforms, which turned compulsory activation into a way to requalify the unemployed and to secure labour supply. Compulsory participation in activation schemes has been advanced from after three years of unemployment (1993), to one year (1998), and, ultimately, to nine months (2006) – with even tougher requirements for younger unemployed. There was a softer requirement for unemployed people above 55 years old but it was abolished in 2001. The requirement for taking any available job was also severely strengthened from after four years (1993) to six months (1995) to three months (1998) to day one (2002). This means that the unemployed are forced to take jobs in any (low wage) sector independently of education and experience. The requirement of daily commuting time has also increased (1994) and so have sanction procedures. In the initial phases, the system included human resource developments such as personal action plans and education possibilities but gradually turned more and more oppressive. It is still the UI funds, controlled by the unions, that assess whether unemployed people fulfil the requirements, but the monitoring by municipalities and states has increased.

Starting from the so-called 'System Revision' in 1987, Dutch UI has undergone even more profound changes over the past 30 years. Until 1987, those who had worked at least 130 days in the 12 months preceding unemployment received a short-term benefit of maximum 6 months, which was equal to 80% of the previous wage. After that, a prolonged benefit with the same 80% replacement rate took effect. The duration of that benefit was dependent on the age of the unemployed, but had an upper limit of 2 years. Taken together, one could stay in receipt of UI for a maximum of 2.5 years[1]. As shown in Table 1, the 1987 reform entailed a

major restructuring of Dutch UI. First, work record requirements were made much more stringent. From 1987 onwards, Dutch legislators draw a distinction between a weeks' condition' on the one hand, and a years' condition on the other. To be entitled to the short-term benefit, claimants were now required to have worked at least 26 weeks in the past 12 months. Entitlement to the prolonged benefit was now conditional upon the additional requirement that claimants had worked at least 3 years in the past 5 years. Second, the replacement rate of both the short-term and the prolonged benefit was reduced from 80% to 70% of the previous wage. More importantly, however, the reform also introduced a third type of benefit -the so-called 'follow-up' benefit-, which was accessible after expiration of the prolonged benefit. The level of that newly-established benefit was no longer related to the previous wage of the unemployed person, but was instead set at 70% of the minimum wage. This implied that, for most of the unemployed, the transition from the wage-related prolonged benefit to the flat-rate follow-up benefit was associated with a decrease in actual benefit level. As for benefit duration, matters seem to be somewhat more complex. At first glance, the 1987 reform involved a substantial increase in the maximum period – from 2.5 years to 6 years[2]. However, the extension of the benefit duration merely applied to those with extensive work records who were able to meet the more-stringent years' condition. For people with a shorter work history, often younger workers, who could only fulfil the weeks' condition, the maximum period was actually reduced from 2.5 years to half a year. After that, many of them would have to rely on means-tested social assistance, which generally has lower rates of benefit.

A second major revision of the benefit structure of UI followed in 1995, when Dutch government decided that the short-term benefit would thereafter also be a flat-rate amount of 70% of the minimum wage. Because both the short-term and the follow-up benefit were now linked to the minimum wage instead of claimants' previous wage, the prolonged benefit was re-defined as the 'salary-related benefit' – a term which we shall also use from here on. The 1995 reform entailed further tightening of the work record requirement for the short-term benefit (from 26 weeks in the last 12 months to 26 weeks in the last 39 weeks) and the salary-related benefit (from 3 to 4 years in the past 5 years). Again, the maximum benefit period was prolonged from 6 to 7.5 years, but only for those with an extensive work record who were eligible for the salary-related and the follow-up benefit. For people with a shorter work history, the maximum period stayed at 6 months, and because the short-term benefit was now a fixed percentage of the minimum wage, matters got even worse for most of them. Although

Dutch trade unions were able to cut short all government attempts to further lower the replacement rates (Hoogenboom, 2011), benefit levels were nevertheless tampered with in a more 'hidden' way, that is, by freezing or not indexing most of the benefits in a number of years (Green-Pedersen, 2002). The abolishment of the follow-up benefit in 2003 was the third and -for the time being- last major reorganization of the benefit structure of Dutch UI. An obvious consequence of the abolishment was that the maximum period one could receive unemployment benefits -now only encompassing the short-term and salary-related benefit- declined from 7.5 years to 5.5 years. From 2003 onwards, the basic benefit structure has remained intact, but the work record criteria were made more stringent and the benefit duration was cut on multiple occasions. In 2008, the reference period in the weeks' condition was reduced, so that benefit claimants now had to have worked for 26 weeks in the past 36 instead of 39 weeks. Due to the shortening of the salary-related benefit in 2008 (from a maximum of 5 years to 38 months) and of the short-term benefit in 2009 (from 6 to 3 months), the maximum benefit duration declined from 5.5 years to 41 months. Those with shorter work histories, however, are now only entitled to 3 months of UI. Starting from 2016 until 2019, the maximum period of the salary-related benefit is gradually being lowered even further (from 38 to 24 months), so that in 2019 the maximum period will be 27 months. In stark contrast to benefit duration, benefit levels have remained rather stable since 1995. The only meaningful change that happened (in 2009) was the small increase in the replacement rate (from 70% to 75%) during the first two months of unemployment. However, that increase did not primarily serve the purpose of improving the living conditions of the unemployed, but was rather intended as an incentive to encourage unemployed people to start looking for a new job as quickly as possible.

Next to the steady but steep decline in social rights over the past 30 years, Dutch UI has also gotten considerably more conditional in terms of work-related obligations. Although the acceptance of suitable work has always been one of the entitlement criteria, the passing of the Law on Penalties and Measures (*Wet Boeten en Maatregelen*) in 1996 compelled social security administrations to enforce the already-existing sanctioning policies more vigorously than was previously the case. As a result, the social obligations written down in formal law were now enforced much more strongly in everyday policy practice (van Oorschot & Engelfriet, 1999). What is more, the definition of suitable work was also sharpened on a number of occasions (Bruttel & Sol, 2006). A first tightening took place in 1992, when the demands on occupational, geographical and wage mobility were specified in more detail for

the first time. According to the new suitable work definition, unemployed people were, after six months of benefit receipt, expected to accept job offers at an increasingly lower educational or wage level, and were not allowed to decline jobs that are within a maximum commuting time of three hours. In 1996, the concept of suitable work was tightened again, but this time only for school leavers, who were now expected to accept any job offer from the first day of unemployment. For this specific category, all jobs were considered to be suitable, and could thus not be declined without running the risk of being sanctioned by the administrative bodies. In 2008, the policy of regarding all work as suitable was extended to all unemployed people. Each and every unemployed person receiving a benefit should now accept any job offered to them after 12 months of benefit receipt. As of 2015, this obligation is imposed on all unemployed after only 6 months.

Why retrenchment of unemployment insurance should have met strong public resistance, but didn't

According to Pierson's (1994, 1996) theory on the new politics of the welfare state, retrenchment is generally not a popular path for politicians to pursue because welfare policies, once enacted, create self-interested constituencies that will defend their beloved policy against governmental cutbacks by punishing the political actors responsible or retrenchment in the coming elections.[3] The argument goes that because these welfare constituencies bear the concentrated costs of retrenchment, they are the ones most likely to mobilize against it. Conversely, it is rather unlikely that those with dispersed benefits, who may, for example, favour retrenchment out of a belief that it shall ease their tax burden, will mobilize in support of it. Faced with the threat of severe electoral losses, politicians may thus simply abstain from retrenchment altogether. However, as described above, retrenchment of UI did happen across Europe, and in Denmark and the Netherlands in particular. What is more, in both countries, there has been some resistance against that retrenchment, but it has been, to say the least, rather modest (Goul Andersen, 2011a; Hoogenboom, 2011). The puzzle to be explained then is why the welfare constituencies of Dutch and Danish UI, who should have mobilized against retrenchment out of self-interest, did not do so. One way to solve this puzzle is to argue that retrenchment may be implemented with little public outcry if the welfare constituencies are minor groups with little resources to mobilize. This line of reasoning is best suited to explain retrenchment of social assistance schemes, e.g. the retrenchment of the former American AFDC-scheme (Soss & Schram, 2007) or the

retrenchment of social rights for migrants in the Danish social assistance schemes (Goul Andersen, 2007). In such cases, it is indeed plausible that the absence of public resistance was caused by the size of the affected group and their inability to mobilize. However, this argument is less persuasive when it comes to retrenchment of general unemployment schemes that for decades delivered economic security to large parts of the workforce. Both Dutch and Danish UI covered large segments of citizens across sectors, across families, and across a lifetime. Furthermore, the sizeable group that has lost on retrenchment is not at all characterized by an inability to mobilize. On the contrary, the Dutch and Danish unemployed have had a full infrastructure of organizations specialized in mobilizing their concentrated interests – as they are represented by trade unions. Nevertheless, in the Dutch case, the declining legitimacy and power of the trade unions might be partly responsible for the relative ease with which UI was retrenched (Hoogenboom, 2011). It is true that in the Netherlands trade union membership dropped from 24.5% in 1987 to 17.7% in 2015 (OECD Statistics, 2018), and, as mentioned earlier, the social partners were barred from the administration of UI in 2002. Nevertheless, the Danish case shows that even when trade unions remain relatively powerful (i.e. high levels of union membership[4] and strong involvement in benefit administration), unemployment benefits can still be retrenched with fairly little public opposition. Thus, only looking at the power of organized trade unions cannot fully explain why there was so little public resistance against retrenchment of UI.

Another way to solve the puzzle is to argue that policymakers have successfully prevented the welfare constituencies from mobilizing against the enacted cutbacks by applying a strategy of 'blame avoidance' (Weaver, 1987). There is indeed ample evidence from the Dutch and Danish cases that the political elites did their best to blame-avoid, as one may recognize all three of Pierson's (1994:19-26) blame-avoidance strategies in the retrenchment of UI, particularly in the initial phases thereof. A first strategy, obfuscation, is about hiding the cutback and the consequences thereof from the public through the implementation of 'invisible' reforms (Jensen, Arndt, Lee, & Wenzelburger, 2017). Freezing or not indexing social security benefits, as was done a number of times with unemployment benefits in the Netherlands, is one typical example of how governments can lower benefits without attracting much public attention, and, accordingly, without arousing much public resistance. Another example of obfuscation is the reduction of benefit duration in times of an economic boom, as few would have long unemployment spells in such an economic climate. This might also help explain the lack of resistance in the period between 1995 to 2007, when the Dutch

and Danish economies boomed. A second blame-avoidance strategy, division, is about targeting the retrenchment to specific subgroups within a broader policy target group, so that smaller groups within the welfare constituencies are prevented from joining forces. In both Denmark and the Netherlands, cutbacks were first and foremost targeted at (younger) unemployed people with relatively shorter work records. The 'insider' workforce, consisting mainly out of (older) workers with a longer work history, were initially affected to a much lesser extent. As a result, younger workers were less likely to gain support from older workers in resisting retrenchment. What is more, not only were workers with longer work records, at first, spared from many of the cutbacks, the duration of unemployment benefits was even expanded considerably for this particular group in the Netherlands. This policy measure may be interpreted as a manifestation of Pierson's third strategy of blame avoidance, compensation, which, more generally, refers to the act of giving something in return for the losses suffered due to the retrenchment. Other examples of this strategy are the more lenient work requirements for older unemployed people introduced in Denmark in 1995, or the 'compensatory' schemes that allowed sabbatical leave for childcare and education implemented during the first Danish labour market reform in 1993. However, after the initial changes, the retrenchment, especially harsher conditionality and shorter benefit duration, came to affect all groups of unemployed, the compensation schemes were abolished, and the number of people that fell out of the unemployed benefit system increased. Though not without its merits, the idea that political elites made changes that took the anticipated reactions of those with concentrated interests in the unemployment benefit into account can thus also not fully explain the absence of resistance against retrenchment.

A third way to solve the puzzle of little public opposition against retrenchment of UI in Denmark and the Netherlands -which we advance in this article- is to argue that the public, including the welfare constituents, accepted the retrenchment because it was targeted at a group that is generally considered to be less deserving of social welfare – the unemployed. What all of Pierson's blame-avoidance strategies have in common is the implicit assumption that welfare constituents are bound to resist retrenchment out of self-interest; and should therefore be obfuscated, divided, or compensated. However, scholars from the 'new politics literature' have rarely grounded such claims in empirical analyses of the actual opinions of welfare constituents (Giger, 2012). More general public opinion research has shown that benefit recipients and groups who are particularly vulnerable on the labour market, such as the lower educated, are somewhat more generous (Alston & Dean, 1972; Bean & Papadakis,

1998) and less conditional (Fossati, 2018; Houtman, 1997) towards the unemployed - presumably out of self-interest considerations (Jeene & van Oorschot, 2015). Because these groups stand to lose most from cuts in unemployment benefits and harsher work requirements, it is only natural, so the story goes, that they will oppose such measures most strongly. However, this 'welfare constituency effect' is generally not that large (Taylor-Gooby, 1985; van Oorschot, 2006). This is because support for social welfare is not entirely a matter of self-interest, but is also informed by moral judgements on the welfare deservingness of policy target groups. According to the welfare deservingness framework (Jeene, 2015; Larsen, 2006; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), the able-bodied unemployed of working age are evaluated much harsher on the so-called 'CARIN-criteria'[5] (i.e. **c**ontrol, **a**ttitude, **r**eciprocity, **i**dentity, and **n**eed) compared to other target groups, such as the elderly or the disabled. This, in turn, so the argument continues, is why public support for unemployment benefits and social assistance is often found to be considerably lower than support for pensions or healthcare (Jaeger, 2007; Laenen & Meuleman, 2017; van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Previous studies have shown that the unemployed are indeed often associated with undesirable traits such as fraudulent behaviour and laziness (Furaker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Furnham, 1983; Furnham & Hesketh, 1989; Larsen, 2002; Maassen & De Goede, 1989). Furthermore, such negative deservingness perceptions are known to increase people's acceptance of retrenchment proposals (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014; Slothuus, 2007). It could thus be that retrenchment of UI met so little public opposition in Denmark and the Netherlands because its constituents deem unemployed people to be relatively undeserving of social welfare.

However, most prior empirical deservingness research has almost exclusively focused on the broader population, instead of on specific groups of welfare constituents. As a result, we know next to nothing about the deservingness opinions of the constituents of UI. One notable exception is the study of Furaker & Blomsterberg (2003), which showed that Swedish citizens with present or previous unemployment experience had less stigmatising attitudes towards unemployed people compared to those without unemployment experience. This is in line with previous studies suggesting that having received welfare benefits, or, alternatively, being proximate to benefit recipients, is likely to reduce negative stereotyping (Hedegaard, 2014; Soss & Schram, 2007). However, Furaker & Blomsterberg (2003, p. 197) continue with the conclusion that "*most of the supposedly stigmatising attitudes appear to be relatively common among the population*", which, importantly, also includes the presently or previously

unemployed. For example, about half of the presently unemployed agreed that many of those who receive unemployment benefits would be able to get a job if they just wanted to; among those who had been unemployed in the 10 years preceding the survey, no less than 72.7% agreed to the statement. Thus, the little we do know about the deservingness opinions of the constituents of UI suggests that -despite being more positive than non-constituents, they too have rather stigmatising attitudes towards unemployed people. It could be the case, though, that such deservingness perceptions do not matter much to constituents when forming opinions about unemployment benefits, as their self-interest in those benefits outweighs whatever they think of others using the system. Yet again, the role played by such popular deservingness perceptions in opinion formation among the welfare constituencies has not yet been subject of investigation, and thus remains an open question. Therefore, the remainder of this article shall explore how the welfare constituents of Dutch and Danish UI assess the deservingness of the unemployed, and how these deservingness perceptions influence constituents' generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed.

Methodology

Data and methods

To test our core argument, we use data from the unique but hitherto underused Welfare Opinions Survey (WOS), conducted in the Netherlands in 2006 (n=1972, participation rate=73%) and in Denmark in 2008 (n=1464, participation rate= 49%).[6] The reason for selecting this particular survey is threefold. First, by measuring public support for both the social rights and social obligations of the unemployed, the survey connects quite well to the above-described policy developments in Dutch and Danish UI. Second, its measures of self-reported receipt of unemployment benefits (in the past, present, and for the Netherlands, also predicted receipt in the future) allow us to identify the Dutch and Danish welfare constituencies of unemployment provision. Third, the survey provides an exceptionally fine-grained account of people's deservingness perceptions about the unemployed. Taken together, the WOS offers fertile ground for examining what role the deservingness perceptions of welfare constituents might have played in their acceptance of reforms that led to less generous and more conditional UI. The cross-sectional nature of our data naturally limits our ability to make causal arguments though. After all, our core argument that deservingness perceptions have prevented the constituents from resisting retrenchment can easily be turned around in terms of causal logic. That is, it could also be the case that the

retrenchment was accompanied by intense public discussions about the welfare deservingness of unemployed people in political discourse and mass media, and, accordingly, invoked rather harsh deservingness perceptions among the broader electorate and the welfare constituents in particular. However, available longitudinal data demonstrate a pattern of relative stability in popular opinion towards the unemployed in Denmark and the Netherlands between the period prior to severe retrenchment of UI (i.e. the 1970s and early 1980s) and the period during or after the retrenchment (Jeene, van Oorschot, & Uunk, 2014; Larsen, 2004; Maassen & De Goede, 1989). Nevertheless, the present article cannot contribute to the more general debate about how preferences shape policies and how policies shape preferences. The more modest contribution of the article is to help explain the puzzling absence of public resistance.

The empirical analysis is built around three questions: (1) How generous and conditional are the welfare constituents towards the unemployed?; (2) How do the welfare constituents perceive the unemployed on a number of deservingness dimensions, and (3) What role do constituents' deservingness perceptions play in shaping their generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed? The first question is addressed by comparing the average level of support for the social rights and obligations of the unemployed among constituents to that among non-constituents. The second question is tackled by sketching how the constituents and non-constituents evaluate the unemployed on four different deservingness dimensions roughly corresponding to the CARIN-criteria (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). As for the third question, we present the results of OLS regression models in which we regressed people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed on their constituency status and popular deservingness perceptions. We also included an interaction term between constituency status and factor scores based on the deservingness items to assess whether the impact of deservingness perceptions differs between constituents and non-constituents (see Appendix A). As a robustness check, we re-ran the models while controlling for respondents' social-structural characteristics and political ideology (see Appendix B). It must be noted at this point, though, that direct cross-country comparisons of the regression parameters are impeded by a different operationalization of some of the independent variables in the two countries (i.e. different question wordings and/or response categories). Therefore, between-country comparisons are drawn on a more abstract level; comparing broad empirical patterns instead of specific statistical effects. Because older, higher educated, and higher income people were oversampled in the Netherlands, a weighting procedure was applied to correct

for this. Comparison to national statistics revealed that such weighting was not necessary in the Danish sample.

Dependent variables

In light of the development towards declining rights and rising work obligations in Dutch and Danish unemployment protection from the mid-80s onwards, we consider it pertinent to study public support for both the social rights (i.e. welfare generosity) and the social obligations (i.e. welfare conditionality) of the unemployed. ***Welfare generosity*** is measured by a single item asking respondents to what extent, on a scale from 0 to 10, society should grant jobless people the right to financial support, given that public funds are limited. An additional asset of the item is that its introduction induced respondents to think in terms of retrenchment: *"If we cut back on benefits, the question of who has a greater or lesser right to financial support from society will become more important."* This particular framing might have, in addition to capturing people's support for the social rights of the unemployed, also tapped into people's resistance against retrenchment of those rights. Higher scores would then also reflect a stronger opposition to retrenchment of unemployment provision. ***Welfare conditionality*** is operationalized as a sum scale of 6 items about the requirements that the long-term unemployed (of any age) should have to fulfil in order to continue receiving unemployment benefits. The following requirements were mentioned in both countries: (a) look for work, (b) participate in activation programs, (c) receive training or retraining, (d) accept any paid job that is offered, (e) accept daily commuting time of more than two hours, and (f) move to another town or city to find work. Whereas the Danish respondents were given a dichotomous choice (yes=1; no=0), the Dutch respondents could, in addition to either agreeing (=1) or disagreeing (=0), also select a neutral response category (agree nor disagree=0.5). The resulting scale variable ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 6, with higher scores representing stronger acceptance of imposing social obligations on the unemployed.

Independent variables

Identifying those who bear the concentrated costs of retrenchment of UI, that is, *the* ***welfare constituencies***, is a tricky but important empirical issue. As mentioned in the introduction, we chose to identify the constituents on the basis of self-reported receipt of unemployment benefits in the past, present, and future (see Table 2). Present receipt was measured by asking

respondents whether they, or any other members of their nuclear family (DK) or household (NL), currently receive an unemployment benefit. The number of respondents that reported to currently receive an unemployment benefit is, however, rather small in both Denmark (5.8%) and the Netherlands (3.8%). At first glance, this suggests that the welfare constituencies of Danish and Dutch UI constitute rather marginal groups. However, the insurance element embedded in unemployment protection makes that those who have recently experienced unemployment, or expect to do so in the near future, should also be included in the welfare constituency. Especially in the Danish and Dutch 'flexicurity' models, where broad or compulsory UI is combined with highly flexible labour markets, it is important to take the past and future aspects of benefit receipt into account. In Denmark, recent experience with unemployment was assessed by asking respondents whether they or their partner had been unemployed within the last five years – to which 18.8% reported that they had. In the Netherlands, this item was not available, but we could use a forward-looking item that asked respondents to appraise the likelihood that they would be forced into unemployment in the coming 12 months. About 8% of the Dutch sample considered the possibility that they will become unemployed and claim benefits in the coming year by responding to the question with 'highly likely', 'likely', or 'likely nor unlikely'. Taken together, the *core constituency* amounts to 25.8% in Denmark and 15.7% in the Netherlands.[7] Next to the core constituency, we identified a *peripheral constituency*, comprising of respondents who do not belong to the core group but report to have received an unemployment benefit earlier in life. As these people have had first-hand experience with UI, it might be that they are still concerned about the fate of that insurance. In Denmark, 19.7% of the respondents belong to the peripheral constituency; in the Netherlands this is 20.4%. Finally, the third category we constructed are the *non-constituents*, who have never in their life received unemployment benefits, and, at least in the Netherlands, also do not expect to do so. This non-constituent group includes a little over half of the Danish sample (54.5%) and 63.9% of the Dutch sample.

Table 2. Sample distribution of the core constituency, peripheral constituency, and non-constituency

	Denmark (n=1464)		The Netherlands (n=1946)	
1	Core constituency • currently receiving unemployment benefits within the family • experienced unemployment in the last 5 years	25.8%	Core constituency • currently receiving unemployment benefits within the household • expect to be unemployed in the coming 12 months	15.7%
2	Peripheral constituency • received unemployment benefits earlier in life	19.7%	Peripheral constituency • received unemployment benefits earlier in life	20.4%
3	Non-constituency • never received unemployment benefits and not been unemployed in the last 5 years	54.5%	Non-constituency • never received unemployment benefits and don't expect to become unemployed in the coming 12 months	63.9%

*Note: the constituencies reported in the table are mutually exclusive, meaning that a respondent may only be in one of the categories

The ***popular deservingness perceptions*** regarding the unemployed that are used in the analyses are related to the five CARIN-criteria (see Table 5 for question wordings and response options). Unfortunately, only two items, corresponding to the criteria of attitude and identity, were asked in the exact same way in both countries. The first one probes respondents' (dis)agreement with the statement that they 'have little in common with typical unemployed people', which we have taken as a measure of the degree to which respondents feel close to the unemployed in terms of *identity*. Unlike most previous research on deservingness opinions, which in its measurement of identity most-often narrowed it down to ethnicity or nationality (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017), we thus opted for a much broader interpretation of the concept. The second item present in both the Danish and the Dutch questionnaire refers to the attitude criterion, and asked respondents to what extent 'unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services'.[8] The question wording and response options of the other deservingness items differed slightly between the countries. In Denmark, we took respondents' appraisal of the living standard of the unemployed as an indication of the extent to which they perceive the unemployed as being in *need*. In the Netherlands, need was operationalized as an evaluation of the ease with which people on unemployment benefits can make ends meet. The final deservingness perception, which concerns the efforts undertaken by unemployed people in finding a job, refers to both the *control* criterion and the *reciprocity* criterion. Unemployed people who show little willingness to work may be held personally responsible for being unemployed [control], but may also be regarded as 'cheaters' who do

not reciprocate to society by displaying the expected job-seeking behaviour [reciprocity] (Petersen, 2012; van Oorschot, 2000).

Finally, we also included political ideology and some social-structural characteristics as ***control variables*** in the regression models. Age in years was recoded into six categories: (a) 15 to 24, (b) 25 to 34, (c) 35 to 44, (d) 45 to 54, (e) 55 to 64, and (f) 65 and more. Educational level is measured as the highest education attained by respondents and consists of three categories: lower, medium, and higher.[9] Self-reported monthly household income was grouped into four classes in both countries.[10] Gender is a dichotomous variable distinguishing between men and women. Political ideology was measured as respondents' self-placement on a conventional left-right scale.

Results

The generosity and conditionality of the constituents and non-constituents

Table 3 reports the average support for granting unemployed people the right to financial assistance in times of retrenchment in the three constituent categories, and shows that the core and peripheral constituents are somewhat more inclined to grant financial assistance to unemployed people compared to the non-constituents. In Denmark, the peripheral constituents are more generous towards the unemployed than the core constituents, but the difference is minimal. It should be noted though that support for the social rights of the unemployed is considerably lower than support for the rights of the old and disabled across all constituent categories in both Denmark and the Netherlands. Even the (core) constituents of unemployment insurance thus seem to care less for the unemployed than they do for the elderly and the disabled. That lower position of the unemployed on the constituents' welfare priority list might in itself already be a first indication as to why they have accepted retrenchment of UI.

Table 3. Public support for the social rights of the unemployed

	Denmark			The Netherlands		
	Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents	Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents
Support for the social rights of the unemployed 0 = no right at all 10 = absolutely the most right	M = 6.77	M = 6.86	M = 6.25	M = 6.23	M = 6.25	M = 5.92
Support for the social rights of the elderly 0 = no right at all 10 = absolutely the most right	M = 8.18	M = 8.37	M = 8.08	M = 7.27	M = 7.24	M = 7.10
Support for the social rights of the disabled 0 = no right at all 10 = absolutely the most right	M = 8.84	M = 8.89	M = 8.93	M = 7.45	M = 7.40	M = 7.34

As for welfare conditionality, Table 4 reveals that almost all Dutch and Danish respondents - regardless of whether one is a non-constituent or a constituent- accept some of the 'softer' work-related obligations, such as looking for work, participating in activation programs, and undergoing (re)training. From this perspective, public support for imposing social obligations on the unemployed is sky-high in both Denmark and the Netherlands. However, the opinion gap between constituents and non-constituents becomes obvious when looking at acceptance of some of the 'harder' obligations, which turns out to be much lower among the constituents. Rejection of the idea that unemployed people ought to accept any paid job offered to them, accept daily commuting time of more than two hours, or move to another city or town to find work, is more common among core constituents, and, albeit to a lesser extent, peripheral constituents. Although constituents are thus somewhat less demanding in terms of wage, occupational and geographical mobility, it is most definitely not the case that all constituents argue for an entirely unconditional UI. In both countries, for example, no less than 1 in 3 core constituents feels that unemployed people should be forced to accept any job offered to them, even if that job is well below one's previous salary or educational level.

Table 4. Public support for the social obligations of the unemployed among the core constituents, peripheral constituents and non-constituents

	Denmark			The Netherlands		
	Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents	Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents
Social obligations index 0 = no obligations 6 = strong obligations	M = 3.51	M = 3.65	M = 4.06	M = 3.81	M = 4.01	M = 4.28
a. Look for work						
Yes	97.8%	97.6%	98.6%	94.1%	93.8%	94.1%
No	2.2%	2.4%	1.4%	1.5%	0.7%	1.4%
Neither agree nor disagree				4.4%	5.5%	4.5%
b. Participate in activation						
Yes	86.5%	89.9%	92.0%	86.5%	90.3%	92.9%
No	13.5%	10.1%	8.0%	3.9%	1.5%	1.1%
Neither agree nor disagree				9.6%	8.2%	6.0%
c. Undergo training or retraining						
Yes	94.1%	95.5%	97.2%	88.0%	87.8%	90.6%
No	5.9%	4.5%	2.8%	2.9%	2.0%	1.4%
Neither agree nor disagree				9.1%	10.2%	8.0%
d. Accept any paid job that is offered to them						
Yes	33.5%	38.1%	49.7%	32.4%	36.5%	45.2%
No	66.5%	61.9%	50.3%	36.2%	25.0%	18.2%
Neither agree nor disagree				31.4%	38.5%	36.6%
e. Accept daily commuting time of more than 2 hours						
Yes	25.5%	29.5%	41.3%	14.9%	18.1%	21.0%
No	74.5%	70.5%	58.7%	72.2%	61.0%	47.8%
Neither agree nor disagree				12.9%	20.9%	31.2%
f. Move to another town or city to find work						
Yes	14.7%	14.0%	26.6%	15.3%	19.9%	24.9%
No	85.3%	86.0%	73.4%	60.7%	52.7%	43.3%
Neither agree nor disagree				24.0%	27.4%	31.8%

The deservingness perceptions of the constituents and non-constituents

In line with the Swedish findings of Furaker & Blomsterberg (2003), Table 5 demonstrates that, despite being somewhat more positive than non-constituents, large parts of the Danish and the Dutch constituencies have rather harsh deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed. With the exception of identity considerations, the Dutch constituents even hardly differ from the non-constituents in their perceptions of the unemployed. In Denmark, no less than 60.8% of the core constituents and 64.9% of the peripheral constituents are convinced that most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one. In the Netherlands, about half of the constituents think it occurs (very) often that unemployed people make little or no effort to find work, while the other half approximately thinks it occurs sometimes. Less than 10% claim that unemployed people never or rarely show such

unwillingness to work. Most Dutch and Danish constituents thus hold the unemployed personally responsible for being unemployed [*control*], or feel that they are not contributing enough to society in terms of job-searching behaviour [*reciprocity*]. Perhaps even more striking is the large share of constituents answering that they have little in common with typical unemployed people. In Denmark, about half of the core and peripheral constituents do not really identify with unemployed people. In the Netherlands, this even rises to 65.5% in the core and 66.5% in the peripheral constituency. Relatively large parts of the Dutch and Danish constituencies thus consider themselves to be different than most unemployed [*identity*]. Furthermore, about half of the Dutch constituents also feel that unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community for the benefits and services that are given to them. Although the Danish constituents are somewhat less inclined to demand gratitude, 43.5% and 36.6% of the core and peripheral constituency respectively still think that unemployed people should be grateful for what they receive [*attitude*]. Perceptions of *need*, finally, are also rather 'unfavourable' (as in: 'not in need'), particularly in Denmark, where about half of the Danish constituents believe that the unemployed have a fairly good standard of living. In the Netherlands, there seems to be greater concern about the actual needs of the unemployed, as only 14.8% of the core and 16.7% of the peripheral constituency argue that it is (very) easy for a family to make ends meet on an unemployment benefit. However, caution is warranted when interpreting the middle category of 'only just' ('*het kan net'*), as this might also be the typical Dutch way of saying that unemployed people are doing just fine, and are thus not really needy. What should, above all, be remembered from Table 5, though, is that most constituents of UI do not -as one might intuitively expect- have particularly favourable deservingness perceptions about unemployed people – despite the fact that they too are, were, or expect to be, part of the group of jobless people in receipt of an unemployment benefit.

Table 5. The deservingness perceptions of the core constituents, peripheral constituents and non-constituents

Deservingness criteria	Question wording	Response categories	Denmark			The Netherlands		
			Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents	Core constituents	Peripheral constituents	Non-constituents
Control/reciprocity	DK: "Most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one"	(strongly) disagree	30.1%	23.8%	15.4%			
		agree nor disagree	9.1%	11.3%	9.8%			
		(strongly) agree	60.8%	64.9%	74.8%			
	NL: "How often do you think it occurs that unemployed people make little or no effort to find a job?"	never to rarely				9.2%	7.1%	6.7%
		sometimes				43.2%	44.7%	44.5%
		(very) often				47.6%	48.2%	48.8%
Attitude	DK & NL: "Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services"	(strongly) disagree	34.9%	38.7%	27.6%	29.4%	28.9%	24.0%
		agree nor disagree	21.6%	24.7%	24.4%	23.4%	24.6%	27.7%
		(strongly) agree	43.5%	36.6%	48.0%	47.2%	46.5%	48.3%
Identity	DK & NL: "I have little in common with typical unemployed people"	(strongly) disagree	26.3%	17.9%	10.0%	9.0%	12.2%	6.7%
		agree nor disagree	26.9%	31.2%	21.2%	25.5%	21.3%	18.7%
		(strongly) agree	46.8%	50.9%	68.8%	65.5%	66.5%	74.6%
Need	DK: "How do you estimate the living standard for unemployed people in Denmark?" (0 = extremely bad; 10 = extremely good)	rather bad (0-4)	33.0%	28.2%	22.5%			
		not bad, not good (5)	22.8%	21.5%	23.4%			
		rather good (6-10)	44.2%	50.3%	54.1%			
	NL: "To what extent do you think it is difficult to make ends meet on an unemployment benefit?"	(very) difficult				30.0%	27.0%	28.2%
		only just				55.2%	56.3%	57.2%
		(very) easy				14.8%	16.7%	14.6%

The role of deservingness perceptions in explaining generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed

The final question addressed here is what impact popular deservingness perceptions have on people's generosity and conditionality towards the unemployed. To what extent do such deservingness considerations weaken constituents' support for social rights and strengthen their acceptance of social obligations? As shown in Table 6 and Table 7 respectively, the results of the OLS regression models are quite similar in Denmark and the Netherlands. In both countries, we find the expected effect from being in the constituency of UI. As shown earlier, those in the core constituency and the peripheral constituency are more generous and less conditional than those in the non-constituency. However, the strengths of these effects are modest. In unstandardized terms, the Danish core constituents are only estimated to score 0.51 points higher on the 11-point generosity scale and 0.54 points lower on the 7-point conditionality scale than the non-constituents. In the Netherlands, the core constituents score 0.31 points higher on generosity and 0.46 points lower on conditionality. The constituency-effect thus seems to be somewhat larger in Denmark than it is in the Netherlands. This is also reflected in the slightly higher explained variation of the regression models including only the constituency dummy in the Danish sample compared to the Dutch sample. Above all, however, it should be remembered that being in the constituency or not explains very little of the variance in people's generosity and conditionality. In Denmark, only 1.2% of the variation in support for social rights and 4.1% of the variation in support for social obligations is explained by self-reported benefit receipt and unemployment experience. In the Netherlands, the explained variance is even lower: 0.6% for generosity and 2.6% for conditionality.

Table 6. OLS regressions estimating the constituency and deservingness effects on generosity and conditionality in Denmark (standardized coefficients)

	Generosity (0-10)			*Conditionality (0 – 6)*		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Welfare constituency						
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.100**	.046 ns	.045 ns	-.138**	-.084**	-.082**
core constituency	.094**	.016 ns	.021 ns	-.200**	-.120**	-.121**
Deservingness perceptions						
control/reciprocity		-.118**			.246**	
attitude		-.114**			.089**	
identity		-.154**			.061*	
need		-.164**			.143**	
deservingness factor			-.379**			.383**
core x deservingness factor			.023ns			.003ns
R^2	.012	.146	.139	.041	.189	.182
n	1414	1401	1386	1389	1375	1361

** Significant at 0.01-level, * significant at 0.05-level, ns non-significant.

The already-weak effect of being in the core or peripheral constituency is weakened even further once popular deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed are taken into account. In case of generosity, the difference between the constituents and non-constituents of both Dutch and Danish UI even becomes insignificant. As all the different deservingness perceptions included in this study exert a particularly strong influence on people's generosity and conditionality, it appears that variations in these moral deservingness assessments of the unemployed matter much more than simply being in the constituency or not. Having negative deservingness perceptions markedly weakens support for social rights and strengthens support for social obligations. More specifically, we found lower levels of generosity and higher levels of conditionality among those who (a) regard most unemployed as lazy people not trying hard enough to get a job, (b) demand that the unemployed show their gratitude for the benefits they receive, (c) see the unemployed as different from themselves, and (d) believe that the living standard of the unemployed is relatively good. As shown in Appendix A, the effects of these deservingness perceptions remain strong and stable even after controlling for respondents' social-structural background (age, gender, education and income) and political ideology. In terms of explained variance, the models including the deservingness perceptions have much larger explanatory power than those including only the constituency dummies. In Denmark, the explained variation rises to 14.6% in case of support for social rights and to 18.9% in case of support for social obligations when deservingness

perceptions are taken into consideration. In the Netherlands, it increases to 14.2% for generosity and 13% for conditionality. Finally, we included interaction terms between the core constituency dummy and factor scores based on the deservingness items. If the self-interest of the constituency made their deservingness assessment less relevant for opinion formation, one should expect a negative interaction effect. However, there is no sign of such an effect. Thus, it appears that deservingness perceptions matter as much for the core constituency as they do for the non-constituency.

Table 7. OLS regressions estimating the constituency and deservingness effects on generosity and conditionality in the Netherlands (standardized coefficients)

	Generosity (0-10)			*Conditionality (0 – 6)*		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Welfare constituency						
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.074**	.060*	.061*	-.100**	-.083**	-.088**
core constituency	.062**	.035 ^{ns}	.036 ^{ns}	-.153**	-.127**	-.130**
Deservingness perceptions						
control/reciprocity		-.186**			.098**	
attitude		-.150**			.162**	
identity		-.120**			.152**	
need		-.093**			.065**	
deservingness factor			-.356**			.324**
core x deservingness factor			-.022^{ns}			.010^{ns}
R^2_a	.006	.141	.141	.026	.130	.133
n	1871	1476	1421	1736	1476	1374

** Significant at 0.01-level, * significant at 0.05-level, ^{ns} non-significant.

Conclusion and discussion

The puzzling absence of severe public resistance against retrenchment of UI in Denmark and the Netherlands was the starting point of the article. In the past few decades, a large segment of the Danish and Dutch electorate have experienced a severe deterioration of their protection against the risk of unemployment. Most remarkable is the reduction in the duration periods and the increased conditionality while receiving unemployment benefits. We suggested that, in addition to the waning power of the trade unions (particularly in the Netherlands) and the successful application of elite blame-avoidance strategies, the deservingness assessment of the unemployed among those with concentrated interest (i.e. the welfare constituents) might have been pivotal for the absence of resistance. The article finds that even those who belong

to the core constituency, that is, those who at present receive unemployment benefits, were unemployed in the recent past, or expect to be unemployed in the near future, hold rather negative deservingness perceptions regarding the unemployed. Thus, even in the core constituency, it is a widespread perception that unemployed people could get a job if they really wanted one, that they should be grateful when helped, that their living conditions are fairly good, and that they are different from 'us'. We also find that these negative deservingness perceptions are strongly correlated to support for defending the rights of unemployed and accepting conditionality. These deservingness perceptions appear as important for attitudes among the core constituency as they are for the non-constituency. Thus, there is no indication that self-interest in the UI system crowds out the importance of deservingness assessments. This finding goes against the basic assumption made in the 'new politics literature', which in its original formulation tends to take for granted that groups with concentrated interest will have a strong self-interested preference for preventing retrenchment.

An intriguing question that logically follows from all this is to what extent the patterns found in our two country cases are part of a larger European country. As for deservingness perceptions, data from the fourth wave of the European Social Survey, conducted in 2008/09, show that Danish and Dutch people with unemployment experience are not particularly harsher towards the unemployed than those living in the rest of Europe (see Appendix C). For example, also in most other European countries, a considerable number of constituents of UI feel that the unemployed do not really try hard to find a new job. At the policy level, generalizations about Europe as a whole are less straightforward. On the one hand, retrenchment of unemployment benefits and the lack of severe public opposition to that retrenchment is clearly not confined to the Dutch and Danish cases, as it can be observed in other European countries as well (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011; Clasen & Clegg, 2011). On the other hand, there have been countries where, at times, retrenchment of UI did encounter much stronger public resistance than it did in Denmark and the Netherlands – as was the case, for example, in France and Germany (Hoogenboom, 2011; Palier, 2010). One possible explanation is that the elites in those particular countries at those particular points in time were less successful in obfuscating, dividing, or compensating the welfare constituents then they were in Denmark and the Netherlands. A logic more in tune with the core argument presented in this article is that the retrenchment of UI might have faced less public resistance in Denmark and the Netherlands because the relatively low unemployment rates observed in

these countries fostered harsher deservingness assessments of unemployed people - presumably because job opportunities are (perceived to be) better, and, accordingly, those who are unemployed are considered to be more deviant (Larsen, 2006). In a context with high unemployment, the core constituency might resist retrenchment more severely. There are indeed pieces of evidence from our Danish case that in the aftermath of the financial crisis, when the unemployment rate increased to 8.4 % (2010), and more and more citizens started to fall out of the unemployment scheme (2012), the government was forced to implement a number of ad hoc schemes to moderate the consequences of curtailing the unemployment duration. However, in our point view, even in the high unemployment scenario, the resistance seems to be more focused on welfare deservingness than on self-interest assessment. Furthermore, even in those countries where retrenchment of UI met stronger public opposition, it was usually less intense compared to resistance against retrenchment efforts in old-age pensions (e.g. raising the retirement age) or healthcare schemes (e.g. raising the out-of-pocket payments). It seems rather hard to believe that it is mere coincidence that the target groups of those schemes -the elderly and the sick- are generally also considered far more deserving of social welfare compared to the unemployed (van Oorschot, 2006) - even, as we have shown, in the eyes of the constituents of UI. To a certain extent, this may also help explain (a) why cuts in UI have often been more severe than cuts in pensions, sickness insurance or disability benefits (Green-Pedersen, 2002; Korpi & Palme, 2003; Lee, Jensen, Arndt, & Wenzelburger, 2017; Nelson, 2007), and (b) why politicians tend to resort more to ’invisible’ policy measures when retrenching pensions, while hiding cutbacks appears to be less important as far as unemployment benefits are concerned (Jensen et al., 2017).

Endnotes

[1] The exception to the rule were the unemployed older than 60, for whom the maximum benefit duration amounted to 6 years.

[2] The unemployed older than 57.5 were even able to continue receiving unemployment benefits until they reached the retirement age of 65.

[3] But see Giger (2012) and Giger & Nelson (2011) for critical notes on the assumed unpopularity and adverse electoral consequences of welfare state retrenchment.

[4] Although trade union density in Denmark declined from 75.2% in 1987 to 65.4% in 2015, it is apparent that Danish trade unions still have considerable bargaining power (OECD Statistics, 2018).

[5] The criterion of **c**ontrol refers to the personal responsibility welfare recipients are perceived to have over their situation. **A**ttitude denotes the degree to which recipients are perceived to be grateful and compliant. **R**eciprocity is about the perceived contributions recipients have made to society in the past, present, or future. The **i**dentity criterion refers to people's feelings of similarity and identification with recipients. **N**eed is about the financial or health needs recipients are though to face. For a more detailed description of the CARIN-criteria and the way the public evaluates different policy target groups on these criteria, see van Oorschot (2000, 2006) and van Oorschot & Roosma (2017).

[6] Norway also participated in the cross-national survey project, but is excluded here because many of the survey items of interest for this article were not presented to the Norwegian respondents.

[7] The lower share of respondents in the Dutch core constituency is most likely the combined result of three factors. First, the time period of the forward-looking item in the Dutch questionnaire was much shorter than the period of the backward-looking item in the Danish one (12 months vs 5 years). Second, while the Dutch forward-looking question only probed one's own predicted likelihood to become unemployed, the Danish backward-looking question also asked about the recent unemployment experience of the respondent's partner. Third, the larger welfare constituency in Denmark might also reflect the somewhat more fluid nature of the Danish labour market.

[8] Although one could say this item rather measures a belief about how things should be, instead of a perception of how things are (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015), it is the best available option in the data.

[9] In Denmark, lower education is coded as those with primary and secondary education indicated as highest schooling level plus those indicating no education level. Medium education is coded as those with vocational training. High education is coded as those with so-called short-, medium, or higher further education. In the Netherlands, lower education is '*basisonderwijs + vbmo'*, medium education is '*havo/vwo + mbo'*, and higher education is '*hbo + wo'*.

[10] The four income categories and their sample distribution in Denmark and the Netherlands are:

Income category	Denmark		The Netherlands	
Cat.1	Below DKK 16.666	17.7%	Below EUR 1150	7.8%
Cat.2	DKK 16.666 to 33.333	25.3%	EUR 1150 to 1800	22.4%
Cat.3	DKK 33.334 to 58.333	33.4%	EUR 1801 to 2600	31.2%
Cat.4	Above DKK 58.333	23.6%	Above EUR 2600	38.6%

*Please note that the numbers represent the monthly gross income in Denmark but the net income in the Netherlands.

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Appendix A. Principal component factor analysis of the deservingness items

Table 9. Principal component factor analysis in Denmark

		1st factor
Control/reciprocity	Most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one.	.833
Attitude	Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services.	.791
Identity	I have little in common with typical unemployed people.	.604
Need	How do you estimate the living standard for unemployed people in Denmark?	.508
Eigenvalue		1.943
R^2		.486
n		1405

Table 10. Principal component factor analysis in the Netherlands

		1st factor
Control/reciprocity	How often do you think it occurs that unemployed people make little or no effort to find a job?	.729
Attitude	Unemployed people ought to be grateful to the broader community because they receive benefits and services.	.787
Identity	I have little in common with typical unemployed people.	.678
Need	To what extent do you think it is difficult to make ends meet on an unemployment benefit?	.378
Eigenvalue		1.753
R^2		.438
n		1422

Appendix B. Robustness check with social-structural and ideological control variables

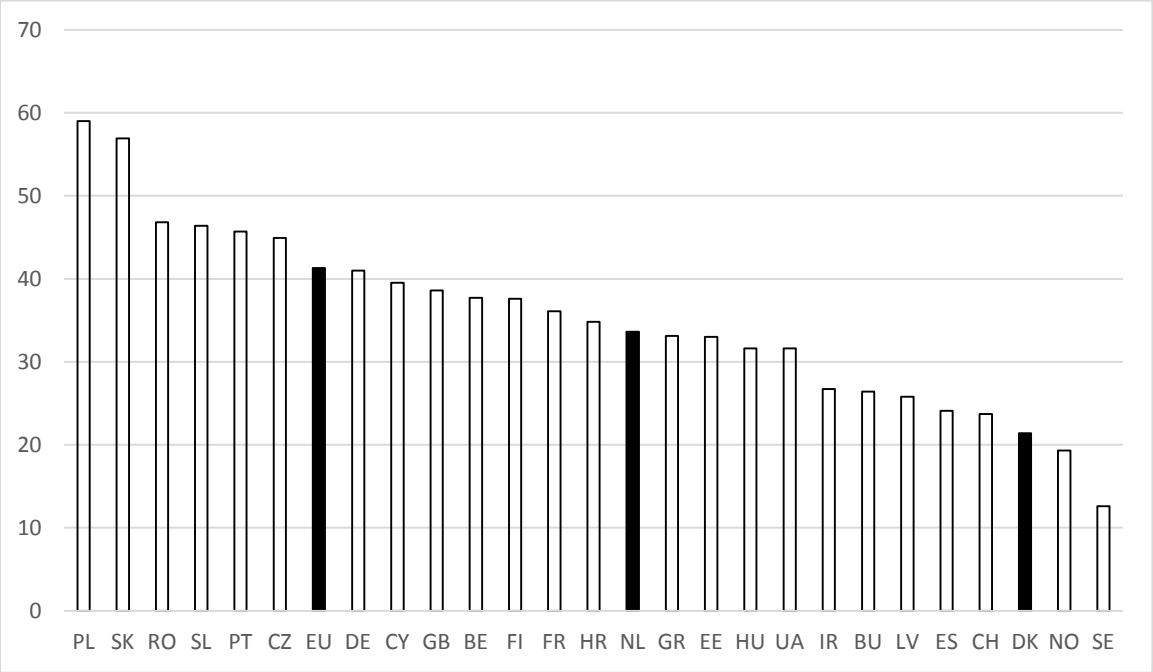
Table 8. OLS regressions estimating the constituency and deservingness effects on generosity and conditionality in Denmark, while controlling for age, gender, education, income and political ideology

	Generosity (0-10)		*Conditionality (0 – 6)*	
	DK	NL	DK	NL
Welfare constituency				
non-constituency	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
peripheral constituency	.050 ^{ns}	.040 ^{ns}	-.072**	-.043 ^{ns}
core constituency	.041 ^{ns}	.008 ^{ns}	-.076**	-.064*
Deservingness				
control/reciprocity	-.130**	-.154**	.238**	.083**
attitude	-.153**	-.138**	.111**	.183**
identity	-.119**	-.086**	.036 ^{ns}	.098**
need	-.144**	-.093**	.127**	.068**
core x deservingness factor	.028 ^{ns}	-.045 ^{ns}	.006 ^{ns}	.033 ^{ns}
Age				
15-24	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
25-34	-.068*	-.012 ^{ns}	-.160**	-.084*
35-44	-.058 ^{ns}	-.035 ^{ns}	-.137**	-.012 ^{ns}
45-54	-.019 ^{ns}	-.039 ^{ns}	-.148**	-.011 ^{ns}
55-64	-.011 ^{ns}	-.031 ^{ns}	-.052 $_{ns}$	.059 ^{ns}
65+	-.072**	-.112**	-.139**	.217**
Gender				
Male	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Female	.010 ^{ns}	-.024 ^{ns}	-.088**	-.032 ^{ns}
Education				
lower	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
medium	-.047 ^{ns}	-.009 ^{ns}	.053 ^{ns}	.003 ^{ns}
higher	-.100**	.050 ^{ns}	.078*	.017 ^{ns}
Income				
Cat.1 (lowest)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Cat.2	-.036 ^{ns}	-.064 ^{ns}	.033 ^{ns}	.060 ^{ns}
Cat.3	-.041 ^{ns}	-.066 ^{ns}	.050 ^{ns}	.089**
Cat.4 (highest)	-.045 ^{ns}	-.081**	.097**	.116**
Political ideology (left – right)	-.034 ^{ns}	-.096**	.059*	.101**
R^2	.161	.157	.229	.205
n	1376	1476	1354	1476

** Significant at 0.01-level, * significant at 0.05-level, ^{ns} non-significant.

Appendix C. The deservingness perceptions of the Dutch and Danish constituents of unemployment insurance in a comparative perspective

Figure 1. The proportion of ESS respondents (in %) with unemployment experience in the past 5 years who agree (strongly) to the statement that 'most unemployed people do not really try to find a job'



Countries: PL=Poland; SK=Slovakia; RO= Romania; SL=Slovenia; PT=Portugal; CZ=Czech Republic; EU=European average; DE=Germany; CY=Cyprus; GB=Great Britain; BE=Belgium; FI=Finland; HR=Croatia; NL= The Netherlands; GR= Greece; EE=Estonia; HU=Hungary; UA=Ukraine; BU=Bulgaria; LV=Latvia; ES=Spain; CH=Switzerland; DK=Denmark; NO=Norway; SE=Sweden. Israel, the Russian Federation, and Turkey were not included because they are generally not considered to be part of Europe.

Source: ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.4. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC.

Question wording:

(a) Unemployment experience: "*Have you ever been unemployed and seeking work for a period of more than three months in the past 5 years?"*
   1. Yes
   2. No

(b) Deservingness perception of the unemployed: "*Please say how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statement about people in [country]. Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job*."
   1. Agree strongly
   2. Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Disagree
   5. Disagree strongly